1: Burrows--142-143
116, 646, 537

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

1-3

"Other evidence on rules of conduct is verbal. Yet much of it is in a native setting, hence probably more representative of native behavior than replies to questions from a foreigner would be. It consists of the harangues delivered by the chiefs to the people at three public meetings held in the men's house. At these meetings the chiefs not only make announcements and issue specific orders, but lecture the people about their conduct in general. These speeches or sermons are a traditional way of 'laying down the law'.

There were three of these meetings during our stay. One object of the first, held on August 14, was to issue as formal chiefly commands the suggestions of the American physician about hygiene, made during the visit of the ship that had brought us to Ifalik two weeks earlier. But the immediate occasion of the meeting was a chance remark of Spiro's that there were Americans on other islands, doing the same kind of work that we were doing on Ifalik.

Unexpectedly, this stirred up considerable excitement. The whole expedition, or set of expeditions, seemed to be taken as a kind of competitive examination, in which the visiting Americans would give the various islands a comparative rating in conduct, particularly in cleanliness. In other words, it touched off the lively sentiment of rank--in this case, comparative rank among islands. The people of Ifalik were eager to get a high rating--to gain in rank, if possible, at the expense of their neighbors, in the eyes of the Americans, whom they acknowledged as their superiors; or at least, not to

sink lower. The occasion of the 2nd meeting, held on September 4, was similar; to carry out the suggestions of the American governor and physician, made when the ship called on September 2. The occasion of the third meeting was, at least in part, my request to the chiefs for a performance of the men's religious dances (ur), which otherwise would not have been seen during our stay.

There was a certain amount of formality about the proceedings [KS: public meeting]. Although informal announcements of them spread by word of mouth a day or two before, the formal call was issued (for two of the three we saw) by the lowest-ranking chief, Toromann. He took a conch-shell trumpet, went out on one of the stone piers [143] projecting into the lagoon from Katēlū, and blew repeated long blasts. The meetings were held at the highest-ranking site on the atoll, Katēlū. The people assembled in and about the men's house or big house (Fan Nap), highest ranking building on the site. When they were gathered, the chiefs took their seats beside the highest-ranking part of the building, the ÓngarIk or front ridge-post, decorated with symbols of rank. After a dignified silence, the chiefs spoke. First to speak was always Toromann, the lowest in rank, as if 'introducing the main speaker'. In part the contents of his speech were the same as those of the others, but always he enjoined the people to heed well the words of their chiefs. The second speaker, at least in the first and last of the three meetings (this point not noted for the second one), was Wolpetau, paramount chief. Other chiefs spoke, as the spirit moved them, in no fixed order. This was partly a matter of individual gifts

and inclinations. Old Paliuilimar, who had a reputation as an orator, always spoke, and was the most vehement and dramatic; indeed, at the close of some of his speeches he looked alarmingly exhausted. Wolpetau always spoke, ex officio; but seemed not to revel in it as Toromann and Paliuilimar did. Ordinarily he was a man of rather few words. Maroligar spoke only once, and then briefly, in a low voice. WolpaitIk never spoke at all. Not only was he the youngest in years and length of service, but he was fat, had a very high voice, and was a bit of a clown and butt of ridicule, though the jokes were always good-natured. Commoners never spoke, except for brief interjections of assent and applause, like 'amen-shouting'. In this the most frequent expression was Rongrongo! (Hear, hear!)"

28: Spiro--24 [3] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 623, 537, 184 Ifalik

"The speeches of the chiefs shows a definite pattern of delivery. They talk for a certain time, and then lapse into complete silence for an extended period, the only sound being the swishing of the coconut fibre that the men are making into rope. This interval of silence, theoretically, gives the people an opportunity to express themselves, or to take issue with the chiefs if they desire. I say, theoretically, because at none of the meetings we attended did any one make use of this opportunity."